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# Prologue

The room is cold and empty.

That isn't to say that there were not things in the room, it was more a comment on the culture of the room itself.

It wasn't a room designed to intimidate, or even to produce the melancholy she felt as she was bathed in its presence. This room was simply clinical, a reflection of its master.

The auditor took the glasses from his nose and rubbed them gently with a folded cloth that appeared from a pocket, before being refolded and placed away as efficiently as they had come.

"I shall ask you again, Miss Drakes. In the time that you spent with John O'Connor, would you have ever expected him to act the way he did in Canada?"

She glared at the man, feeling her patience reach cracking point, "It's been three damn years. Three years since I saved what could be saved, and returned home. Three years since I had my last interview. I am not part of this organisation, and I have nothing to do with it anymore. I am not an agent, and I do not care about politics."

The man frowned, "That was not what I asked."

She laughed, and glared at him, "I don't give a shit what you think. In no way do I care. I've paid the price for my loyalty."

He grimaced and adjusted his glasses, "Miss Drakes, I must ask you to cooperate. We are just trying to ascertain the facts. Investigations are being run, around the world, to prevent this from ever happening again."

She glared at him, "Let it. I do not care. I was a teenager when ASIO employed me. I'd fixed my arm with an exoskeleton, something quicker and smarter than anyone else had made. So you employed

me. Made me a bodyguard for a senator, right on the eve of a dozen assassination attempts. I was kidnapped by Josiah McIntyre, arguably the only man who could ever match my intellect. Then I was deployed to Canada, and attacked by my trainer and mentor, and damn nearly killed. I was forced to kill. So... You know what, I think I've done enough."

The man sighed, "I am simply asking questions."

Her blue eyes blazed with anger as she leaned forward in the seat, her mechanical arm hissing from inside, "I am simply refusing to answer."

The man stood slowly, "Answering the questions would be easier."

She glared, "Easier than what?"

"I would be forced to arrest you, and continue this pleasant conversation as an interrogation. One that will not end til we have the answers we seek."

She laughed at him.

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Ted rubbed his brown mess of hair, sitting up with a groan. What woke him?

He blinked, trying to think, when he heard a dull, nearby rumble. He fumbled around and picked up the phone, "Yes?"

The person on the other side appeared surprised that they had woken him, "Sir, I'm afraid I need your full attention."

Ted winced, "Crap. What's happened?"

"I am calling from Sydney, sir. Your wife came here for a meeting?"

He groaned, "ASIO, yeah. What did Susan do?"

"I'm afraid I can't say, sir. Do not expect her to return within at least the next forty eight hours."

He woke up.

"What the hell do you mean by that? She would never agree to do another fucking mission!"

"Sir, remain calm."

Ted felt his teeth grind, "Remain calm? You're telling me you arrested my wife! She's a fucking patriot! Do you even understand how she has saved your life? What she gave up for you and every other ungrateful asshole in this country?"

"Sir, I am simply passing on a message."

Ted hung up in frustration, and his face went white as another sound accompanied the clang of the phone.

He sprinted upstairs towards his newborn daughter as she cried.

\*\*\*

The man didn't seem comfortable in the suit. He almost seemed too big for it. It was a side affect on perception caused by his enormous stature. He would usually capitilise on it to increase the speed of work down in his branch of ASIO, but today was not that day.

Rather, he was faced with the task, the incredibly arduous task, of encouragement.

Something he wasn't much good at, because he would accidentally scare people, even with a reassuring hand.

The Head of the Australian Signals Directorate smiled a broad tooth smile, trying to be encouraging, but probably imitating a shark instead. "We have a heck of a task ahead of us today... You see, today, we'll be trying to begin our review of the CSIS crisis, and how we could set up protocols in our own nation to prevent them from occurring again."

The room fell deathly silent, and he wasn't sure if it was his smile, the way he phrased it, or the task in and of itself.

A rogue ASIO agent had executed a series of terrorist strikes against Canada, including wiping out a quarter of their intelligence agency, because he no longer believed in freedom. The man had had enough, and so he attempted to destroy relations between the two countries, and truth be told - it was working.

At length he sighed and opened the folder in front of him, "Right. Moving on, the first issue is access. We still are not sure how John O'Connor managed to gain access to Canada. It was not on a civilian passport. Being the former head of Operations, he may have utilised flaws in our system, or had old unused passports from previous operations."

One of the men at the table winced, "There's still too much conjecture about how this was done. I don't think we can make an accurate, or even umbrella, protocol to deal with this with our current information. There has to be something more."

Another member, thumbing through the brief smiled, "The agent involved would be a Susan Drakes, yes?"

The Head smiled and nodded warmly, "Yes."

The man shrugged, "Then let's interview her. She was just brought in for questioning. It was in this mornings packet."

Andrew frowned, "And we'd just be able to get another branch to hand her over?"

The man shrugged, "For a few hours? It's worth a shot."

\*\*\*

Anna Doherty was the head of the Joint Terrorism Taskforce, a group within MI5 dedicated to eliminating and preparing for terrorist threats.

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the utter crap that had been caused by an ex-ASIO agent had finally made it to the top of her in pile.

She looked the document over, ignoring the fact that three words in

five were redacted, and paused as she reached the end.

She had been attempting to ignore use of conjecture, and any other ballsy move that might have her leap to the wrong conclusion, but this fact was solid.

She picked up her phone, "Get someone from Human Resources in here, now."

She glared at the last line again.

Susan Drakes had retired.

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Isaac Jacques stood up slowly from the end of the table, and begun to circle the room. As he passed by each member of the investigative group, he could see them shiver out of the corner of his eye.

He smiled.

"Gentleman, we have suffered greatly. Not only did we watch in horror as our nation was attacked, by a trained member of an allied nation, no less! Not only that, we were forced to pour over the facts. We have seen atrocities, spoke with so many friends who lost their own. We have been forced to witness the very worst of mankind. And now, we lie at a time when a decision must be made, or we may as well set ourselves adrift." He paused, letting it sink in, letting the fresh memories of horror rise to the surface again. "ASIO fudged it. They had a man, a good man, and turned him into a weapon against us. For no reason, no good reason, they failed to keep their own under wraps. Instead, we have another ASIO agent, with a history of violence, and a weakness to her age, sent here to repair the damage. She stops the man, but in the process we have lost the best of our own agency."

He came back to his seat, and leaned on the head, "Friends, now is the time for justice. ASIO must be punished for their inequities, and Drakes must be extradited for her failure to control the situation. We have no alternative."

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The newsreader smiled warmly at the camera, "And now we're going live to Canada, where a spokesman for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service says that they have finished their investigation into the terrorist attacks that killed and maimed so many."

The camera cuts quickly, to a smiling man in a suit who speaks just a second too slowly, telling of the time difference. "Yes, thank you, Kat. We have finished our investigation, and the results are pretty much what you can expect. We have maintained throughout the investigation our certainty that Australia failed to act in the right manner, and we believe that is the case." He continues on ignoring the reporter attempting to ask a question, "The Australian agent who ended the terrorist's life acted in a way that put the public in danger, and the terrorist himself used to be a member of ASIO. If you can't trust your own friends, who can you trust?"

The reporter looked a bit more concerned than she should have, "What action is the Canadian government actually undertaking?"

"We've already established new procedures and protocols to protect our nation, but we really don't think this will be over until we have interrogated the agent we blame for so much loss."

The reporter was stunned, "Does Canada intend to request Australia to hand over the agent who saved so many lives?"

The man sighed heavily, anger appearing on his face, "She didn't. Even if we hadn't responded to the crisis in twice the time it took us, if she hadn't been involved, nearly seventy percent of those involved would not have died. She intervened in a sovereign nation, and nearly killed us all. She needs to pay for her crimes." He sighed heavily, whistling in the microphone, "We believe the Australian government will agree with us."



# Chapter One

Drakes looked at the man putting her cuffs on with contempt, "You know these can't hold me, right?"

The agent winced, "They have a device inside that shocks the hell out of you if you break them."

Drakes grinned, "I know that. That's kinda why they won't work."

The agent ignored the gleam in her eyes and stood back, "Look, you aren't in a position to be a bitch. CSIS just publicly blamed you for what went wrong in Canada, and they want us to hand you over to them. The Signals guys just want some help, so help 'em out. You have no friends here anymore, girl."

Drakes rolled her eyes and opened her palm, displaying the keys to the cuffs, "Fine. Take them back. Just because you are being nice, and I don't want you to get fired."

The agent shook his head as he took them, "Why did someone like you quit, anyway?"

Her face went dark, "How many friends have you had to kill, in your job?"

He winced, "Yeah, I guess."

She shrugged as he loaded her into the van, "I was happier out there. In here... I'm just the girl who murdered the guy who trained her. Like you said, I've got no friends here."

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Ted rocked the cradle gently with a foot as he leaned over the bed, quickly tossing clothes into a bag, packing it tightly. He should have had it packed, and if she was here, Susan would have berated the hell out of him. But she wasn't, and it was the reason he was packing.

After she'd left, Susan had prepared escape plans and contingency plans. She'd made him memorize all of them. With ASIO as a disgruntled employer, anything could happen.

And now... She wasn't coming home.

It was time to disappear, at least for a short while.

He zipped the bag shut and turned around to pick up his daughter, but the world swam sideways and he felt the floor rise up and hit him in the face.

His last thought before shadow took him was, "I should have kept the bag packed."

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She yawned as her cuffs were connected to a steel bench, and a man sat down opposite her. "Miss Drakes, how was your trip?"

She laughed, "People are pissed off with me. What do you think?"

The man, an unusually tall figure, smiled softly, nervousness surrounding his whole figure, "Sorry about that. We'll try and keep this short, and maybe it will help you out. We're just trying to figure a protocol for if what happened in Canada, happened here."

She paused, looking him over carefully, "I'm about sick of dealing with everyone. I left because I couldn't handle it anymore. I'm a broken agent, nothing I give you will be of any use."

He shrugged, "I doubt that. You might be done with the field, but operating on creating protocols? Its hypothetical and distant. That's all we want."

She sighed and ripped her mechanical arm free of the table, rubbing her forehead with it, "I don't know if it can be prevented, to be honest. There is a hell of a lot of intelligence behind the attacks I prevented. First major attack I stopped... The guy was theoretically smart. He understood the way the environment worked, and so he could create crazy powerful weapons. He also had charisma going for him. The second attack... It was someone who had years of field

experience. He personally trained me, and so could predict me. He knew my weaknesses and strengths. He knew just about anyone he could send against us. How do you defend against your own boss?"

The man smiled softly, "It can be done, but it is difficult... But lets forget a preventative protocol. Lets say your boss turned against us, and you called it in. How would you want us to handle it?"

She blinked and frowned, drumming her free hand on the table, "I think... I think time would be most important. People like that can do an enormous amount of damage in a really short space of time."

The man nodded, "So... What would we do?"

Drakes shrugged, "Retask satellites, contact agents in the field and set up a live conference. Get everyone in the field coordinated against the individual. Then bring the stations up to speed and get a manhunt out. Only once that is done, try and contact the individual and see if they had any reason for their insane actions. If there's some sort of blame game, shut down both sides and send someone new after the time critical target. It's the only safe way."

The man frowned, watching her carefully, "And if that means an attack is successful?"

She just laughed, "So what? It gives the politicians spin. Let them spin that we need more power or something like that. In the field, that doesn't matter. It doesn't save lives. It might cost them if you don't prepare for a rogue agent. If you take out a good agent thinking they turned, then you lose the ability to effectively command the remaining agents."

The man grinned, "You thought about every possibility, didn't you?"

Drake glared, "No. No I didn't."

He rolled his eyes, "Because no one can think of every situation. I know your intellect, Miss Drakes."

Her teeth ground, "Would everyone stop calling me that? I got married. Least you could do is acknowledge it."

The man paused, "Oh. Sorry, that wasn't in the limited information passed on to me."

She frowned, "Mrs. Jameson. Okay?"

He nodded, "Right then." Then three files appeared on the table, "I'd like you to talk through how you would handle these... Both in field, and as someone back here."

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Samuel chortled at her, "What? You want her as some sort of heroine? An idol?"

Anna glared at the man who was, for all intents and purposes, her boss. "What about that do you think is funny? We have a foreign agent, a woman, who saved hundreds, even thousands of lives. Publicly denounced by the people she saved."

The director of MI5 nodded emphatically, "Absolutely. So let's find a fault. Make everyone hate her. We can use that to our advantage."

Anna rolled her eyes, "I think having Drakes in our custody would be far better. Imagine it - one of the smartest women in the world, by our side. She built an exoskeleton warrior suit when she was first kidnapped. She could empower our army, and make our agents faster and stronger."

Samuel scratched his head, "I don't think you get this at all. We don't want anyone associating us with that woman! I don't care how smart she is, she and her former boss, a father figure if he isn't more, caused a god damn international incident."

Anna glared at him, "She could turn JTA into a force as powerful as the Mossad. I want her."

# Chapter Two

The man, whom Drakes had finally managed to identify as Andrew McKenzie, Head of the Australian Signals Directorate, sighed heavily, watching her.

"You have every skill that we can use. You were one of our best. Leaving... When you did... You triggered a witch hunt, and set yourself up as the target... Why?"

Her jaw set, and she glared at him, "Every person I have cared about during my line of work... In anyway... I have had to kill. I have had friends and colleagues die, that's hard enough. But I saw the face of the man who trained me, protected me, and saved my ass when I was kidnapped. I saw his face when I had to kill him. That's not something anyone can ever take back."

McKenzie winced, and then nodded slowly, "I'm sorry about that... All of this. I'd protect you if I could... But it took a bit of effort to make ASIO hand you over in the short term. I don't think I can twist their arm any more."

She laughed, smiling at him, revealing a piece of that girl who had laughed and run for so long, "Dude, you've done enough. I saw what you did. You've done well... But man... It took me four hours into an interrogation to ID you. That's just sad. You kind of stand out in a crowd."

The man in the suit smiled sadly, "Losing you is still a loss. Especially if the world has its way and you get torn to pieces... You are brilliant, Drakes. Purely. You think faster than most people can grasp. You have been out of the game for years... And you can still piece together who I am. And my rank. Even though I wasn't in this position when you left. I'm part of a group of people who you never had to talk to before. The amount of information in your head is slightly scary."

She smiled sadly and shrugged, "To be honest... I wish it wasn't there. I... I'd give just about anything to be normal. To have my

husband look at me, and not feel stupid. To not be afraid that my daughter will be like me... I became what I am, because I had to. My arm never healed. It should have, but it didn't. So I became better, so I could fix myself. I... I'm just a product of my environment. Seriously... I feel like the world hates me half the time."

McKenzie nodded slowly, empathetic sadness reflected in his brown eyes, "Drakes... No one could ever blame you. You were a teenager, and you were turned into a bodyguard. Someone who puts their life on the line, day after day, after day. Never given a chance to consider if their own life is more valuable than what they are protecting. And you are. You are worth a thousand times more than anybody you ever protected. I can't imagine the good you could have done if ASIO hadn't picked you up... But a hospital had. Your life... Is worth more than I can describe. I just... You're getting a raw deal. I wish you could be protected, but someone is gunning for you."

She smiled, "I know."

Then the expression on her face changed, and her jaw became ever so slightly firmer. McKenzie recognised the look and leapt backwards as she pushed herself to her feet.

Drakes scratched the side of her face and looked at the man like he was an enemy, "My house was just breached. Was it you, or the ASD?"

McKenzie swallowed, "No."

She smiled bitterly, "No idea whether to believe you or not. You are far too likeable... Get the fuck out of my way, and I won't kill you."

She walked towards the door as it was flung open, a guard lowering a taser towards her, but as he fired the two small prongs hit a prepared metal arm, gearing whirring inside, and the taser was ripped from the man's grasp, and she caught it and crushed it.

She didn't pause to fight the guard as she walked out of the room, her foot flicking his out from under him, and a viscous elbow

crushing the man's throat.

Drakes kept walking, war written on her face as alarms began to blare.

She didn't care.

Someone had breached her home.

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His head was pulsing, and he knew that he was still sitting from the way it was hanging.

That... That really hurt.

Why did he have a headache?

And why the hell couldn't he see?

He tried to rub his head and winced as his hands refused to move, just a jangle of metal.

His eyes widened, and he groaned, "Damn. Damn. Damn. You have got to be kidding me."

Then an electrifying thought shot through him.

Arlia.

Where was his daughter?

There was a yank on his head, and he was bathed in light. He blinked, trying to blearily see through the fog of his own eyes, and he could vaguely make out a man wearing a black leather mask standing close to him.

He was holding two things, one small, one large.

Ted blinked furiously, trying to see, and for a fleeting movement he had a clear image. A masked man holding his daughter and a knife.

Ted winced, trying to see, "What do you want?"

The masked man laughed softly, "Come now, I'm sure the husband to Susan Drakes could work that one out."

"I'm not her." He said firmly, and the man threw back his head, laughing. The knife danced dangerously close to his daughter and Ted felt his voice catch in his throat, and then the man shrugged, nonchalantly waving the knife around as he did. "We don't want anything from you. Or your wife, in fact. If you don't try anything, Ted Jameson, then you and you daughter will be handed back to your police. Not a scratch on either of you... Except for the bump on your head, I mean. I have no intention to harm any of you."

Ted stared at him, "Leverage? You're going to use me, and my daughter... To make Susan do something?"

The masked man nodded, "Yes."

Ted burst out laughing, he couldn't help it.

The man gripped the knife tighter, "Is there something comical about a man with a knife, and your daughter?"

"You're going to fucking die!" Ted laughed, and shook his head, "And any scratch you put on either of us... Will replicated a hundred... A thousand-fold on yourself!"

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Andrew McKenzie was standing in the lobby, horror written on his face. Something that he doubted would change anytime in the next few months.

It was carnage.

Guards with broken limbs, others with worse injuries.

Several lay dead, their necks broken or their skulls caved in.

He had asked them to stop her... To contain her... And she had ripped them apart.

Alone.



He pulled his mobile from his pocket and dialled a number, a tired sounding voice answered, "Yes? What is it, McKenzie?"

"Susan Drakes is no longer in my custody."

"What the fuck!?" Came the shouted reply, crackling down the line, and Andrew winced, "Currently I'd estimate that we have six dead, and twenty eight wounded. Something happened at her home."

"Oh shit. Mother-fucking-pile-of-shitting-shitter!" The voice yelled angrily, and then the man regained his composure, "I'll deploy a team to bring her in. You get your people in shape. Also, issue a police bulletin. No one is to come within a hundred feet of her. She is armed and dangerous. Call in all sightings."

The man hung up before Andrew could reply, but he could hardly blame the man.

Last time someone of Susan's calibre had lost it... A nuclear device had nearly been detonated.

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"Hello, Anna Doherty, Joint Terrorism Analysis." She said as she picked up the phone, and her face went white as the voice on the other end spoke.

"You have got to be kidding me!" She growled, "We were bringing her in. She can help us!"

The caller hung up.

Anna put her head in her hands and yelled angrily.

Sometimes, it was the only thing she could do. She might be the head of the JTA... But they were still simply a department within MI5, and when orders came from that high up, and were authenticated... There was no point arguing.

She sighed and logged into the database, and typed a quick command, barely hesitating before hitting the return key.

As far as Joint Terrorism Analysis was concerned, Susan Drakes had never existed.

Even her own investigation was to be expunged.

Susan Drakes was persona non grata.

\*\*\*

Samuel Nikolai paced in front of the heavily armed group, an eight man team. Each with specialties, and expertise in a wide range of weapons and tactics.

They were a retrieval team, one of the best that he had at his disposal.

Which was saying something.

He smiled softly, "MI5 has removed all official records of the target. You are to capture her, alive, and return her here for interrogation. If, for some reason, she is not going to survive, don't attempt to acquire any information. Destroy everyone in sight."

The captain of the team barely shifted from his rigid stance, standing at attention, and Samuel glared, "Something to say, grunt?"

The man winced at the insult, "No sir."

Samuel laughed, "Come now, out with it."

"Susan Drakes is not worth this, sir." The man stated briskly, and Samuel blinked, "Really? Arguably the smartest woman in the world, about to get her ass handed to her by the Canadians, a woman who single-handedly prevented an atomic detonation, and who is the inventor of modern exoskeleton construction, is not worth snatching?"

The captain frowned, "She was a subpar agent, sir. The issue should have been dealt with by those in the know."

Samuel stepped in front of the captain, glaring at him, eye to eye, "Susan Drakes is the only reason that a nuclear device was not

detonated on Canadian soil. The only reason that the USA was not blamed. There is no finer agent, captain. She was kidnapped, but defeated the man who seized her and her technology, almost by herself, when she was still at high school. For god's sake, the woman is only twenty one years old!"

He stepped back and shook his head, "Do not underestimate that woman, captain. She has survived assassination attempts, terrorist attacks, and major damage to her body. All the while... Her mind has been active. That woman, the one you are tasked with bringing in to me... Is the smartest person you will ever meet."

# Chapter Three

How dare they? Who would dare to break the sanctity of her home? Who would be fucking stupid enough to pick a fight with her?

Do not take anyone's family. Take someone's family, and they will not stop until you are dead.

Suzie stepped up behind the police car sitting outside her house, and her hands moved swiftly. The first man collapsed, falling forwards as his neck broke with a sickening snap.

As the other spun around her fist ripped his throat out with a bloody spatter.

She stepped passed them and into her house.

No one touches her family.

Who would be stupid enough to?

Hadn't she given enough? Didn't she suffer enough?

Every night was terror, the nightmares waiting for her to close her eyes. She had given everything! And in return... They tried to take it all again.

She had nearly died a hundred times. Her luck and intellect had barely kept her alive, whilst all around her other people paid the price. How many had to die? How many people had to suffer so that some asshole could get her attention?

She was done with it!

She hated herself far more than she could ever admit, but the rage and darkness that had built within her soul was nothing... Not compared to the rage she found waiting in her heart, this utter blackness that cried out for vengeance. She would strike whoever attempted to leverage her family against her into the grave.

But first, she would make them suffer.

Suzie's eyes widened as she finished the search of the house...  
Neither Ted nor Arlia were here.

And Ted's packing had been interrupted.

He thought she hadn't noticed... But damn... Her paranoia could have saved him.

Tears welled in her eyes and she pushed her fists to her temples, she wouldn't pay attention to this.

She would get him back.

And Arlia.

She would save her daughter.

Even if it meant that a hundred daughters didn't have their fathers come home.

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Ted swallowed as masked men began setting up video cameras, one pointed at him, the other at a small steel table.

The man holding his daughter sighed heavily, "I really must apologise, but things have been... Progressing."

Ted swallowed nervously, "What exactly are you going to do?"

The man adjusted his grip on the baby girl, "I am going to place Arlia on that table, and hold her in place with magnetic clamps. I am then going to record both my actions and your reactions."

A red light flicked on near the front of the camera and the masked man made a sound of satisfaction.

Ted felt fear pumping through him, "What are you going to do to my daughter?"

The man sighed, "I apologise. Your wife has made things

complicated."

"What are you going to do!?" Ted screamed, horror rising in his gut, twisting tighter.

The man placed Arlia on the table gently, and she immediately started crying from the cold. He placed half rings around her wrist, using an electromagnet to lock them in place.

"Fucking tell me, you bastard!"

Arlia looked up in confusion, her crying suddenly vanishing as the man pulled her limbs taut on the table.

Ted felt tears well in his eyes as he saw a knife appear. "Don't... Please... She's just a baby..."

The man spoke as softly and calmly as always, "I am aware. As I have said... I am sorry for this. But Susan Drakes has made this... Essential."

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Andrew looked up through the glass as a dozen men burst into his office and began sealing every scrap of paper in sight into a plastic bag. He ground his teeth together angrily and shoved open his office door, "What the hell is this?"

A man standing by himself spun around, "Ah. You would be... Who exactly?"

He glared, "Andrew McKenzie. And this is the Australian Signals Directorate, I think you might be lost."

The man grinned broadly, "Afraid not. My boss's boss just opened an investigation into the ASD. We are here to ensure that all data is controlled, and protected. We may conduct the investigation, but we don't know for sure yet. We're just here to set up for it. You are to terminate all investigations and on-going procedures, and then hand over everything to us."

He glared, feeling his full height, "Warrant."

The man rolled his eyes and produced it, handing it over with a shrug, "I'm sorry man, but these are the kicks."

Andrew scanned the document, noticing the authentic numbers and passphrases, but more he noticed the seal of approval. The issuing agency.

"ASIO is shutting us down?"

The man smiled softly, "Its nothing personal."

"It's about Susan fucking Drakes!" Andrew roared, his whole office turning to stare at their quiet-spoken boss, as he glared down at the ASIO agent, "We had her in our custody, and you are trying to cover up or paint her as a target. Hard to tell, at the moment. She did her job, why can't people just back off?"

The man sighed heavily, "I am Agent Macedon, and this conversation is over. Do as I have said, and then sit down and shut up. We'll talk to you when it suits."

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Anna paused as the man sat down in front of her.

The man did, his accompanying female officer, did not.

The two police officers wore grim expressions, and the female spoke quietly, just within Anna's peripheral vision, "We are afraid we must ask a favour. Not a nice one."

Anna frowned, "How can I help you, officers? What can the Joint Terrorism Analysis unit do for London's finest?"

The male shook his head, "Not the JTA. You, Anna."

She swallowed nervously, sitting back into her chair, "How can I help?"

The man produced a yellow piece of paper, "We have been investigating certain claims. Those claims have lead us to enough evidence that this warrant was signed. However, we would much

prefer..."

The female spoke again, barely in sight, "That you let us in the door, yourself."

Anna blinked, "What? You want to search my flat? What on earth for?"

"There have been complaints made from ranking members of government." The man said and shrugged, "At this stage its unsubstantiated conjecture. We are simply following a lead."

Anna ground her teeth together, "Explain. Stop side-stepping."

The female sighed, "Cash for influence."

Anna glared over at her, "You think I'm corrupt? That someone is paying me to influence policy their way? I do my goddamn job! This is bollocks!"

The man smiled tightly, "And we will find that when we go to your house, if that is the case. We are simply trying to find the facts. We don't need your permission."

Anna sighed heavily, "This is trite. You may as well arrest me now, you are going to one day anyway, on this charge or another."

"Thankyou for your understanding, ma'am." The man said and stood, "Cuff her."

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Captain J smiled brightly and stepped off the plane, picking up a nearby unloaded case and sprung it open, picking up his machinegun and assembling it with procedural instinct.

A woman punched his shoulder lightly and shrugged on a leather frame filled with knife sheaths. She began inspecting and tucking away each blade, and he smiled softly, "What are you thinking, Sam?"

She laughed, "Retrieving Drakes? This is a dream come true. Time



to pit myself against someone who should be able to think faster than I can move."

He turned and inspected his team, each loading, checking and holstering weapons. His eye strayed, as usual, to Huntington, his explosives expert. The man was unwrapping a small metal sphere with extreme caution, and beginning to pull it apart.

"What's in it, Huntington?" He growled and the man flinched, "Don't surprise me, Captain. This is highly unstable."

J tensed his jaw, muscles rippling along it, "Then you shouldn't have brought it."

"It's a seeker. It can track robotics and target it. Blow up when it gets too close. I'm just setting it up for Drakes and her arm. Didn't get a chance before we left." Huntington spoke slowly, concentrating as leveraged a spinning dial with a knife.

Dunstan laughed in the background, "You have some bonkers ideas sometimes, Hunt."

The captain glanced over at his small arms expert, and as expected, he was holstering his fourth pair of pistols to his person, and a lone ninth gun was holstered to the right leg. "Is this a war zone, Dunst?"

The man shrugged, "Nikolai seems to think so, and he seems a good judge of character, most of the time."

He couldn't argue with that, the man had become the head of MI5 based on skill, not blind luck.

Captain J smiled, "We head out in ten, make sure you're ready."

He approached his technical expert, Kaley, as she sat by herself, typing quickly on a small, rugged-looking tablet computer. "So, what do you think?"

"This sucks ass." Kaley muttered, glaring at the screen, "I can't get past the security. It's locked up tighter than anything I've ever seen."

J's face went white, "You can't get us out of this airport?"

She glanced up, "Oh, what? No. That's taken care of. Before we landed. No... Its Drake's home security system. I've never seen an encryption system like this. The encryption procedure is changing every time I take a crack at it."

J winced, "Aw crap. How tight did she lock up her house?"

"Tight. I know its connected to a GPS system of some sort, though. So if I can get in, we can probably find Drakes herself."

He smiled, "You ready to get us out of here, though?"

"It's done. All the staff have been alerted a group of ASIO agents hunting a terrorist are coming through, armed to the hilt. Our photos attached. Once we're out, a worm will eat all the data. It's clean, Captain."

# Chapter Four

She was in a restaurant, hiding in a booth.

It wasn't the best of hiding places, especially considering the cliché, but she was having trouble thinking.

The TV suddenly cut from a country-style soap opera to a new bulletin, and her eyes jerked up, glaring as she saw the scrolling banner underneath.

Terrorist threatens Australia, tortures child.

Then a censored video kicked in, a masked man holding a knife, a child screaming under him as blood began to spill. The camera cut to a man screaming in rage, tears pouring from his eyes.

Her heart caught in her throat and tears began to fall unbidden from her eyes, she barely noticed that the restaurant had gone silent.

The volume on the TV increased, and it cut back to the reporter, "Again, we apologise for the shocking footage. Terrorists have threatened the Australian government to hand over ex-agent, Susan Drakes."

Her picture appeared on the screen, beside a still of Arlia screaming, "This is the woman, Susan Drakes. She has served as a bodyguard to some of our best politicians, and protected thousands more, in fact she was the sole agent responsible for stopping the nuclear attack in Canada, three years ago. Parliament is yet to issue any statement."

She didn't care.

She couldn't stop the tears.

Couldn't get the picture of Arlia screaming out of her mind, the blood flowing from her baby girl.

\*\*\*

The gun pressed into his temple. He really couldn't give a shit. His eyes were red and tired, and anger flowed through every nerve in his body. He felt like he could break his restraints and kill everyone in the room.

Too bad it was only a feeling.

"Time to call her, Mr. Jameson." The man said and sighed, the knife, still slick with blood reappeared, "I am not a patient man. You will call your wife, and do as instructed, or I will kill the child this time."

Ted looked up at him slowly, "You piece of shit."

The masked figure rubbed his forehead slowly, "I do not care for your moral ambiguities. I have a job to do, and I am efficient. Call your wife, or watch your daughter die."

"She'll find you, and tear you to pieces." Ted growled and the man laughed, "We are trying to arrange a meeting with her. I have no wish to fight your wife. It was simply her... Fault."

The phone was put next to his head, and a mechanical voice spoke, "What is the number you would like to call?"

Ted squeezed his eyes shut, trying to recall, "00, 61, 450, 187, 123, 481, 972."

"Dialling."

Then the call connected, and a shallow breathing was all he heard, "Suzie?"

There was nothing for a short while, but then a broken and cracked voice spoke haggardly, "Ted?"

"It's me. There's some people here who want me to tell you something."

"Go ahead." She said, exhaustion and pain echoing in every syllable,

and Ted glanced at a written message that was held up, "They want to meet at Flinders Street Station, Melbourne. Two o'clock, 1400, at Platform One."

"I'll be there... Ted... Stay alive."

Then she hung up.

Ted swallowed, "She'll be there."

The masked man nodded, "Good..."

\*\*\*

Matthew Macedon looked at the four agents in front of him, their pistols holstered, and he nodded grimly, "Your priority is silence. Be swift, and don't catch anybody's attention. But you have to succeed."

The crew nodded silently, and he cracked his knuckles nervously, "Your target is Susan Drakes. Contain, capture and transport. Get her here, so I can talk to her. If she won't come, make it so she can't argue."

"Yes sir!"

\*\*\*

Captain J stepped off the train at Southern Cross Station, and he sniffed the air, "Almost like home."

# Chapter Five

Suzie sat inside the train, feeling entirely uncomfortable. The station she was coming up to was an open-planned space, with a lot of people in it.

Easy to drop someone with a knife to the back.

Easy to kill a lot of bystanders.

A wince went across her face as she finished the modifications to her arm's exoskeleton and snapped the cover shut. She had a really bad feeling about this.

Suzie tapped her ear, "Broly."

I read you, Mistress Drakes.

She swallowed nervously, thinking about whether that was a good thing.

Broly Core was one of her pet projects after leaving ASIO, an open-source learning Artificial Intelligence which had in-built rules it could never break, but could expand based on its own knowledge. An AI that would protect the world from itself.

ASIO had shut it down as soon as other people had started taking notice of it, and that was probably a good thing.

... This situation had changed things.

So Suzie had reactivated it, and built up a little... But it was still untested.

The train began to shudder as it slowed down, and she breathed in deeply and stood up, grabbing on of the leather hand-grips hanging from the roof.

As the train pulled in she flicked the MyKi card from her hoodie, not for the first time wondering why the Australian government had

chosen an unproven and outdated system, using RFID, over something powerful and proven like NFC-based cards, such as the one used in Singapore.

She rolled her eyes, government officials rarely knew a damn thing about technology - why she had been given so much freedom with ASIO, and so little after she had left.

The train finished its descent and she tapped the MyKi card to the reader, waiting for it to finally let her off.

She stepped off and swallowed nervously as her feet met the platform.

Then she went deaf.

Suzie dove to the side as the concrete turned into something a little less dense. She rolled over and stood up, pistol appearing in her hand, and her eyes flickered from terrified face to terrified face.

She swore and flipped herself into the air, grabbing the top of a bench and sliding under it.

She couldn't see whoever was trying to kill her.

Suzie breathed in deeply, "Broly, you in the security feeds yet?"

Two targets. One on the above platform, centre, not hiding. The other approaching your location, twenty feet and closing. Both armed with a new unknown model of machine gun.

Suzie winced, and leaped to her feet, spinning to see the man approaching through the crowd, and she ducked into a crouch, raising her arm as a metallic disc expanded from it, immediately denting as a dozen bullets slammed into it.

She clenched her fist and flexed, the shield spun apart into shards and launched themselves forward.

Several screamed as the shards slammed into them, and Suzie fired her pistol, the man's head snapped backwards and he collapsed to the ground.

Pain shot through her, and she fell forwards to her knees, swearing at herself.

She glared up and fired a dozen times, causing the other gunmen to duck out of sight, as she sprinted forward under his hiding spot.

No way to shoot her down here.

The opposite was true of herself however.

They had taken her daughter.

She tossed a small disc upwards and it latched into the concrete, and then exploded.

Suzie ducked backwards, falling over as she hit the wall. She winced and touched her stomach where she had been shot and cursed again, "Broly... How long do I have to live?"

The wound does not appear to be fatal, however, you will lose consciousness in forty eight seconds. If you do not receive medical attention within two hours or so, you may then die.

Suzie smiled softly as black flecks started to fill her vision, "Wonderful. This sucks."

\*\*\*

Ted looked at the masked man through bleary eyes, "What did you do with my wife?"

The man shrugged, "I have not the slightest idea. That was not my concern. I was only concerned with your capture, your daughter's capture, and encouraging your wife to arrive at Flinders Street Station. Nothing more."

Ted winced, "So what now, I go free? You let my daughter get to the hospital, after what you did?"

The masked man sighed heavily, "You truly are a dreamer, Ted Jameson. I am afraid... Well, you should have guessed it by now."



Ted swallowed, trying to ignore his fear, knowing that there was no way out of this.

He felt himself silently begging for his wife to come crashing through the door, to tear the head off this madman, and kill them all.

Instead, he was looking down the barrel of a gun.

God help -

\*\*\*

Andrew paused, looking at the blood stains against the wall and floor, and crouched.

He felt the three females who made up his unit tense behind him, and he swallowed cautiously, "Drakes took a beating..."

Alice spoke with pain, "Nobody deserves to be hit like this... What kind of gun did they even use?"

"Something new." Andrew said shrugging, touching one of the shells with his foot, "About .50 calibre... But fired from a gun that was way too small. Probably some sort of magnetic propulsion."

Sheila sighed heavily, "She was our target, wasn't she?"

Andrew stood and looked over to the last member of his team, "Alison, call it in."

She flipped open a phone, "Macedon, we found a trace of Drakes." She pressed a button and the phone switched to speaker mode.

"A trace? Why are you calling?"

Andrew winced, "She was attacked by two armed gunmen, and then six or seven others turned up and took off with her. They used advanced weaponry, or at least something we haven't seen before."

"Wait... What? Someone else is after our girl? What the hell is going on?"

Andrew sighed, "I think someone forced Drakes' hand. She acted out because of a threat."

"Oh... Shoot... People are going to die, aren't they?"

"Drakes killed seven bystanders, sir." Sheila spoke firmly, and Macedon swore loudly, and then sighed, "Fine. Go get her, and make sure she stays alive. Try not to get yourself or any more people killed. If Drakes is facing a threat... Use your own judgement. Got that, Captain McKenzie?"

Andrew rubbed his face, "Yes, sir."

The phone beeped and Alison shut it, "So... What's the plan?"

Andrew smiled tightly, "We kill whoever tried to kill Drakes. Then we get her to come up with a better plan."

\*\*\*

Samuel Nikolai looked across the table at the man sitting there comfortably, reading the few scraps of paper. At length the man lay them down and glared at him, "MI5 are retrieving Drakes. Yes?"

Nikolai frowned, "Yes."

The man scratched his chin, "Without Australia's permission."

"Yes."

The man smiled softly, "You have balls, Nikolai... But as for Canada... We want access to her... Once you're done, of course."

Nikolai blinked, "CSIS wants access to Susan Drakes? Why? So they can publicly execute her?"

"We don't do that." The man said and smiled, "She is a valuable source of information. Very smart, very powerful, and has done some pretty incredible things by herself."

Nikolai sighed and tapped the pieces of paper, "Well... MI5 would like some information."

"Full access to our database on it. In exchange for her."

Nikolai cocked his head, "How much access? Really?"

"Full." The man reiterated and shrugged, "12 months worth. A lot your people could do with that."

Nikolai smiled and held out his hand, "Deal."

# Chapter Six

Suzie blinked in pain, light glaring in her face, but before her eyes could adjust, or she could really start thinking properly, a fist slammed into her face, snapping her neck back and she swore violently, "Fuck!"

Then another fist slammed into her gut, and she heard something blurry being yelled at her.

She blinked, trying to focus, she needed to... Think...?

A fist break her nose.

She blinked, dizzy, trying to understand the words being shouted at her, but she just couldn't.

Then the black closed in around her vision again.

Shit.

\*\*\*

Andrew ducked back down, and cocked his weapon, glancing over at his partner, Alison. "Is that seriously a building full of armed people? In the middle of Melbourne?"

She smiled softly and shrugged, "Its nutters. But what else would you expect, Drakes is involved."

Andrew laughed, "Yeah... Things really do go crazy around her, don't they?"

Alison checked her weapon and turned around, sighting through her scope, "Well, she's good at what she does. What else would you expect?"

He nodded and turned, sighting through his own rifle, "Yeah... Team 2 in position?"

A voice crackled in his ear, "Yes, sir. Seven on the second floor, six visible on the bottom."

Alison smiled, "I've got three on the third floor."

Andrew breathed in slowly, "Take them out."

The gun bucked in his hands, and he resighted, firing again as fear began to appear in his targets.

The gun stopped moving, smoke rising from the end of the barrel, and he flicked it over his shoulder, "Team 2?"

"All down, sir."

He grabbed the anchored rope nearby and slid down to the ground, drawing his gun again as he hit the gravel, and he ran up to the edge of the building, ducking beside the door as Alison sighted and blasted it open with her rifle, covering him.

He stepped inside, firing at a wounded man before he could grasp his weapon and began moving upstairs, "All down on first."

He fired twice as he entered the room, two militants collapsing, a third throwing his hands into the air, "Jesus! We surrender!"

Andrew glared at him, "What are the documents in front of you?"

"We're just mercs!" The man yelled with an Australian accent, "We were just paid to kidnap a girl. They gave us a plan, and some guns."

Andrew frowned, "You were paid to kidnap Susan Drakes?"

"Susan Jameson." The guy said nervously, holding his hands high, and Andrew shook his head, "She's an ASIO agent, you idiot. Who paid you?"

"I just have a name." The man said nervously, reaching down slowly and turning a piece of paper to face Andrew, he pushed it to his side of the table and stepped back against the wall.

Andrew walked up and glanced down, "Aw, shit."

\*\*\*

Captain J leaned back from his rifle and swallowed, "That was an impressive attack. Those guys are good."

Dunstan looked at his captain, "Sir? Really?"

Captain J nodded and looked back down his scope, "Nineteen targets, four man team. They eradicated them in about seven seconds. Their captain is a sniper, like me... In fact, if I wasn't so sure of myself, I'd say he would be the better sniper."

Dunstan rolled his eyes, "A team of snipers, sir? I can just blow 'em up when we need to."

The captain glared back at his explosives expert, "Do it, and I'll be the one to kill you. Scratch that, I'll get Sam to skin you alive. They have information. For now... We watch. Got it?"

"Yes sir."

The captain smiled and glanced over at Kaley, who was busy glaring at a computer screen strapped to her wrist, "You got anything, girl?"

She glared over at him, "No. Drakes is a real bitch."

Kaley went back to glaring at the screen and he sighed, "How so?"

"The GPS I found rigged to her house targeted me when I tripped the wrong thing, and launched a drone. Barely shut down the flying blur of blades. I only could because I used one of her own programming techniques. That's annoying."

His eyes widened, "We almost had a drone rip us to shreds? And you said nothing?"

"I was busy shutting it down." She said with a shrug, "Oh, damn it... My computer just wiped its own memory."

He shook his head, "Maybe breaking into ASIO's database would be easier."

"I had... Now I have to again, once I get this piece of crap working." Kaley growled.

# Chapter Seven

"Holy mother fucking piece of shit!" Suzie screamed in pain, staring in surprise at the man holding the two crocodile clips connected to a car battery.

"Dude... Are you trying to kill me? At least have an alternator in that thing." She glared, but the man didn't respond.

He didn't ask any questions.

He just shocked her again.

And again.

She screamed in pain, feeling bones fracture as her muscles tensed around them, and flexed... But no one asked her questions.

Not a one.

\*\*\*

Sheila frowned and spoke into the small microphone attached to her throat, "Eh... Boss?"

"What is it, Shiela?" Andrew's voice came back from inside, and she winced, "We have snipers watching us. If I recognise the uniforms... They're MI5."

"Aw shit. Really? Whelp... I guess it's time to take them out."

She smiled, "What's the plan, boss?"

\*\*\*

"Captain J?" The voice came, and he winced, "Mr. Nikolai, what I can do for you?"

"You're watching the ASIO unit, correct?"



"Yes, sir." He answered, looking through his scope, "They're still investigating the scene. The only survivor has been escorted off, but only the ASIO units have remained. They told the cops to piss off."

"Good. Eliminate them. With high prejudice. Get any data they collected, and push it our way."

He blinked, "Say what?"

"Kill the fucking ASIO agents!" Nikolai yelled, and Captain J winced, "Yes, sir."

# Chapter Eight

## Chapter Eight

Suzie groaned, opening her swollen eyelids slowly, her eyes flicking around the room.

She was alone.

She sat up slowly, trying to listen, but there was no other breathing in the room.

She grinned and grabbed the chair with both ankles, and backflipped, shattering it on the ground, with a not inconsiderable amount of pain. She pushed herself upright, ignoring the pain from her limp arm as she ran over to the equipment that had been used to torture her.

Suzie attached one crocodile clip to the door frame to her cell, and the other to the handle.

Then she turned to assess her situation.

She didn't have either her arm nor ankle exoskeletons, which meant she was slow and weak. The only tech ology left in her cell was a couple car batteries, a screwdriver, and some power cables.

She sighed and knelt next to one of the spare batteries, using the screwdriver to remove the lid carefully. It was an enclosed system, designed as a non-evaporative housing.

Inside she found a couple of measuring levels, and the acid.

Not a lot of use there.

If they'd left a blowtorch she could make a bomb with a little effort, but as it was, all she had was electricity and cables.

She slapped herself in the forehead, and resealed the battery, and grabbed a nearby jumper cable and tore the rubber off with the

screwdriver.

She then began twisting the wire into a dozen new forms.

Someone collapsed in the hallway with a thud, and some screaming.

She winced and sped up her work, as voices began shouting.

Suzie stood up slowly, the wire wrapped around her body with precious little insulation, but if her math was right, she probably wouldn't die.

Probably.

She felt the weight of the two batteries at her back, and tensed the fist on the arm that worked, the other was held in place that she could block with it.

Suzie smiled and detached her trap from the door, and then kicked it open into the face of the man on the other side.

Before he could react she'd punched him in the chest and stopped his heart.

She turned and sprinted towards the two men attempting to draw their guns, grabbing one around the neck as she kicked the other, feeling the hair on her body scorching from the close contact with that much power arcing through the air.

Both dropped dead.

Suzie glanced around, spotting another cell, and she ran over, picking the lock with a spare piece of wire pointing out from her wrist, and she tossed it open.

She stopped.

Everything in her stopped.

A man lay in a chair, head twisted to the side, blood stains around a gaping whole in his forehead, a splatter of brain and blood behind

him.

She was too late.

... Ted was gone.

Suzie tried to fight the emotion she was feeling, she was still in danger. Arlia was still missing.

But... Her lip trembled, vibrating crazily as she fought back the tears, trying to control her breathing, staying in the moment.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Jameson." A muffled voice spoke behind her, and she turned around slowly, looking at the masked man standing there, with a gun pointed at a sleeping baby in the cradle of his arm.

She felt the rage burn through her, engulfing everything, "You bastard."

\*\*\*

Alison swore, ducking back as a piece of wall the size of her fist vanished.

Sniper fire was everything she feared.

The MI5 unit had begun firing as they were still getting into position, and Alison had taken a knife to the knee almost immediately - she still had no idea who had thrown it.

She checked her rifle, fixed her breathing and spun around, sighting and squeezing off three rounds before ducking down again.

\*\*\*

Kaley gasped as pieces of her midsection vanished. She collapsed forwards onto the ground, blood seemingly pouring from her like water from a tap.

She winced, forcing her hands to move as she triggered one of Dunstan's traps.

\*\*\*

Frank ducked as an explosion made the room to his left vanish in smoke and flame, but the gun mounted to the floor in front of him never stopped turning, as he spun it, making a wall disappear under a hail of heavy fire.

Then he danced backwards in shock and pain, blinking as he realized most of his right hand had vanished into a bloody pulp.

\*\*\*

Andrew slid another bullet into the chamber and resighted, ignoring the heavy gunner - he was down for now.

His primary concerns were the three figures on the rooftop. One sniper, a spotter who seemed to be covered in knives, and someone carrying handguns - but who seemed to have an incredible amount of accuracy with them.

He fired off two shots, slid back down, and began moving to his next contact point.

\*\*\*

Dunstan's head jerked up as he saw Sam hit the ground, coughing, but she was still alive.

He flicked his fingers across his console, setting timers on half a dozen explosives, "Captain, how are they this good?"

The sniper just smiled, "We used to train under them, not with them, Dunst. This four man team is more than a match for us. Blow the bottom floor."

\*\*\*

Sam thanked whatever deity was listening for the invention of body armor, and sat up, pulling the binoculars to her eyes, "Sniper is moving, Captain. Probably six yards right."

Captain J spoke steadily, "I have him... Wind speed?"

She flicked around, spotting something moving, "Twenty six knots."

Captain J adjusted slowly, "Distance to target?"

She frowned, "Two hundred and forty yards."

J fired twice, and began pushing new shells in, "Damn. I think I missed."

# Chapter Nine

The masked man laughed, "If you are willing to be reasonable, Miss Drakes, then you will soon be free to go."

Suzie glared at him, "You tortured my daughter. Killed my husband... Why would I be reasonable?"

"Because your daughter is not yet dead." The man said and shrugged, "But your ingenuity is precisely the reason you were brought here, and you have shown it. A walking electrical suit of armor. Not a bad play."

Suzie sighed, "What do you want me to build? For Arlia?"

The man nodded slowly, "You and your daughter will go free. We have already begun creating the device. Look to your right, on the desk."

Suzie glanced over, noticing the bundle of computer chips and wires for the first time. She ran it through her memory, identifying each piece.

"A weapon. It's supposed to... Stop hearts?" She asked slowly, and the man laughed, "Yes, indeed. It utilizes sound waves to-"

"Shut up." Another man said striding into the room, "You have no idea how it works. She does."

Suzie smiled, "This your work?"

The new figure nodded, "Yes. I'm Isaac Ibrahim, you had my boss arrested."

Suzie winced, "So you used to work for McIntyre... But he would never have allowed you to make something like this. It's the weapon of a terrorist, not a government."

Isaac shrugged, "Why drop bombs and destroy all the resources when you can simply kill the people inside? So... How does it

function, Miss Drakes?"

Suzie frowned, "It negates the brain's own signals, so that if the heart stops, it won't start again. But you haven't found a way to stop the heart yet."

Isaac shook his head, "I have, I just haven't finished it yet." He produced a bundle of chips and lay it on the desk, "Now... Get out of that thing and turn it off, or Arlia dies."

Suzie switched off the batteries and shrugged the copper wires onto the ground, limping over to the benchtop.

She glared, "You're using Pika. My own robotic platform."

Isaac smiled, "Exactly why we needed you. Pica allows us some predictive analysis and control over the frequencies produced, but we need something more. Coupling Pika and Broly Core together would be preferable."

She winced, "Then I'll need my arm back. Broly is stored on it, with the legend commands preventing him from running on any other hardware."

Isaac nodded, "Fair enough."

\*\*\*

Captain J picked through the pockets of the ASIO leader, feeling far more depressed than he had expected. His team had taken a real hit from this man and his team, but all the same... They were just doing their jobs.

The captain pulled an SD card into the open and frowned, he glanced over at Sam and Dunstan, the only other survivors, "I need Kaley's computer."

Sam winced, "I'll find it."

Captain J sat up slowly, looking at the man who had damn nearly killed him, and winced, "A hell of a fight."



The man had managed to shoot the sniper rifle from his hands before Sam had put a knife through his throat.

Captain J had never felt so certain that he was going to die.

Sam returned and handed over the wrist computer, except the screen was shattered.

J shrugged and plugged in the SD card, and then called home.

"MI5, Tech Support."

He swallowed, "This is Captain J. I have a computer from one of my men, badly damaged. It has critical data we just retrieved from the enemy stored on it."

"Just a moment, sir... Can you give me the serial ID on the back of the device?"

He frowned and turned it over, seeing a worn number engraved into it, "Uh... 61718AE9361."

"Thankyou, the data is downloading... The SD card, right?"

J smiled, "That's right."

"Sir, I've got a red flag here. I'm going to bump you higher, okay?"

He winced, "Yes, that's fine."

A new voice came on the line, "This is Samuel Adams, Captain J. I specialize in analyzing a terrorist group based out of the Russian region. The data you just sent us... It's from them. I'll need some time to look at it, but they are a group intent on recreating the Soviet Union. They are also very active, and killing means nothing to them. In their last attack they killed over two hundred civilians to get at a single computer chip."

Captain J nodded, "Thankyou, stay in contact. We will attempt to track, interrogate and eliminate the group."

"Understood. Proceed with caution, sir."

\*\*\*

The man paused, breathing slowly, and he checked his gun slowly. He tapped his throat mike and whispered a number, and it connected.

"This is Captain Phillip, of CSIS, do you read me?"

There was a short burst of static, and then a voice spoke in his ear, "Captain J, MI5. What's going on?"

Phil smiled, "My unit has located the militant hideout where Susan Drakes is being held."

A series of swear words followed, and the man eventually calmed down... Slightly. "My team was nearly eliminated by ASIO, and CSIS had boots on the ground?"

Phil winced, "I'm very sorry to hear that. Wasn't the intention. Just trying to stay under the radar. Australia hasn't exactly sanctioned any intervention."

Captain J sighed, "So you found the targets. Now what?"

"If your team is up to it, I'd like to coordinate with you. These are bad people with impressive skills. I'd like MI5 at my back." Phil spoke earnestly, watching the building carefully.

"We could... But what orders do you have regarding... Drakes?" J spoke slowly, uncertainly.

Phil swallowed, "Not a concern. If she doesn't make it, it is not a concern. Just eliminate the threat that she, and the militants controlling her, are."

Captain J sounded relieved, "Same here. And to be honest... I think it would be better for everyone... If she... Didn't make it."

Phil breathed out a breath he hadn't realized that he had been holding, "I agree."

# Chapter Ten

Captain J glanced down his scope, searching the windows for a target.

He had no spotter this time around, and had to make a few judgement calls as his unit and CSIS converged on the building.

He saw a rifle reposition slightly from the rooftop, and he fired quickly, the gunner going slack and collapsing to the floor.

"We're a go." He whispered into his mike, and he saw rapid bursts on gunfire light up the building.

This was going to be hell.

\*\*\*

Suzie's head snapped up with the gunfire and Isaac spun towards the door, "What in the hell?"

She grinned and grabbed his neck, breaking it. Isaac slumped forwards onto the ground with a thud.

She flexed the fingers on her exoskeleton and glanced back down at the machine she was building.

A weapon designed to eliminate so many people.

A weapon of convenience, the weapon of a terrorist.

Suzie smiled and began to rewire it.

\*\*\*

Sam ducked back behind the stone corner, the CSIS agent beside her wasn't so lucky, and collapsed to the ground in a spray of blood.

This was insane.

Utter hell.

The militants had taken out just about everyone.

Was she the last left?

Another spray of gunfire down the hall, not directed at her, told her otherwise.

She spun into the open, weapon at the ready and froze as she saw her captain. He nodded and turned, and she ran over, falling in behind him.

"Sir..."

He shook his head, "Let's just get through this. The weapons they've been using are better than ours. Fires faster, uses bigger rounds and has a huge clip on them. Grab one. You'll need it."

The two crept down the hall and Captain J kicked in a door, pointing his weapon.

A dead man lay on the floor, and Drakes was working frantically, sweat pouring off her forehead.

Captain J tightened his grip on his gun, but the woman didn't even glance at him, "Killing me isn't going to be overly helpful here... Who are you, anyway?"

Sam felt her throat tense at the emotionless and casual way the woman spoke, and her Captain glared, "MI5, with orders to kill you."

Suzie shrugged, continuing to work, "Well, that's sort of pointless. You need to run. In about two minutes, everybody in this room is going to be very dead. This... Well... Think of it as a bomb without an explosion. It'll stop the hearts of everyone within twenty meters of the outside of this building, if my math is right."

Sam looked at the woman in astonishment, "Why the hell would you build that?"

"They killed my husband. Threatened to kill my daughter. I didn't have a lot of choice... But now? I get to use it on them." She growled, and Sam frowned, "But your daughter..."

"Died the moment there was gunfire." Drakes said without hesitation, wiping sweat from her forehead with her shoulder, "Now please... Run. Enough people have died because of me."

Captain J nodded and turned, "Time to move, Sam."

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The masked man adjusted a tie as he stepped calmly from the back of the building, opening the door of his car and slid in.

He started the engine and then a flicker of fear crossed his serene face.

His left side had gone numb, and it was intensely difficult to breathe.

His hand flew to his heart to check his pulse, but it was already too late and he collapsed forwards, no longer breathing.

# Epilogue

The Australian announcement of the events concerning the last acts of Susan Drakes came swiftly, and with retribution. They denounced the actions of England and Canada, acting on their own soil without even alerting them.

They announced the deaths of ASIO agents simply defending their country.

The Five Eyes alliance between the USA, England, Australia, Canada and New Zealand collapsed.

Though Australian ties with the US and New Zealand remained strong, all ties with the others was shattered.

The US joined in denouncing their actions.

The Joint Terrorism Analysis taskforce was officially disbanded.

MI5 opened an internal investigation to find the cause of the event - announcing that the unit acted without the knowledge or approval of their superiors.

The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service was taken apart, piece by piece, and a temporary taskforce was erected to transition the nation as a new intelligence service was built from the ground up, to assure the public that a disaster of this scale would never happen again.

Susan Drakes was officially declared dead, with no public announcement of where she was buried, but she was named as a hero by the Prime Minister of Australia, and a day of mourning was declared.

The two remaining survivors of the incident, unnamed members of MI5 were incarcerated in a secure prison in an unknown location somewhere in Australia.

The leader of the militants was identified as Geoffrey Whitlam, a man leading a terrorist group that splintered from the Soviet Union in the 80s.

Internally, within ASIO, he was identified as a high ranking officer. An investigation is ongoing.

... The helplines and police reports continue to come in from members of the public that say that they saw Susan Drakes...